

# Joe Liptak View-Master Artist

By J. Clement

Revised 2021

Joe Liptak was hired by View-Master to create Tru-Vue scenes after they acquired their major competitor in 1951. He was their second artist after Florence Thomas. He had a 45 year career at View-Master sculpting dioramas and later designing new products. His greatest love was sculpting figures. He was born in 1923 in Conn. And passed away in 2014 in Portland. He was a fighter pilot in WWII and is remembered as a kind and gentle man with an artist's soul. Most of his View-Master sculptures ended up being trashed, but his work lives on in the beautiful Tru-Vue cards and View-Master reels.

While he was originally hired to create Tru-Vue cards, most of his work involved creating View-Master reels. His earliest work was only published as Tru-Vue cards which had inferior film that faded to magenta. Some of his early work from 1955 on was republished as View-Master reels, but about 8 up to 1957 were not. After 1957 3D scenes were published as both Tru-Vue cards and View-Master reels. Up to 1977 the reels were all published on durable Kodachrome film with superior color and range of shading. Between 1978 and the early 1980s View-Master used an inferior GAF film that faded to magenta in 20 years. Unfortunately two of Joe's greatest dioramas were manufactured in that time period, "Dracula", and "Wolf-Man".

Joe was known for his recreations in 3D of various Disney movies, but his earliest work involved creating classical fairy tales. In addition he created many other cartoon characters as well as some historical and classic stories. The Disney work is his largest single category, but is outnumbered by his other creations. He preferred to be thought of as an artist rather than a Disney artist. His early work was innovative with surprising viewpoints. While Florence Thomas crafted beautiful figures in a realistic classical style Joe had a more modern cartoonish style. Many classical fairy tales were made by Joe and Florence independently.

Joe was hired, in competition with another artist, after creating the scene where Jack exchanges his cow for beans. This is possibly the same diorama.



1953 Tru-Vue F-3 Jack and the Beanstalk - Restored from a faded card by J. Clement





Jack chopped down the beanstalk killing the giant and was now safe with his new wealth.



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1953 Tru-Vue F-3 Jack & Beanstalk (7) – Restored from faded card



A passing woodcutter slew the wicked wolf, & freed Little Red Riding Hood's grandmother.



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1953 Tru-Vue F-2 Little Red Riding Hood (7) – Restored from faded card

There is a whimsical View-Master reel of Little Red Riding Hood created by a collaboration of Joe and Lelia Heath. One scene shows the wolf looking in a mirror while dressing in Grandmother's gown. There are also other versions by Florence Thomas and unknown Hollywood artists.





The Prince, overjoyed at finding Cinderella, asked her to marry him and be his princess.



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1953 Tru-View F-1 Cinderella 7 – Restored from faded card



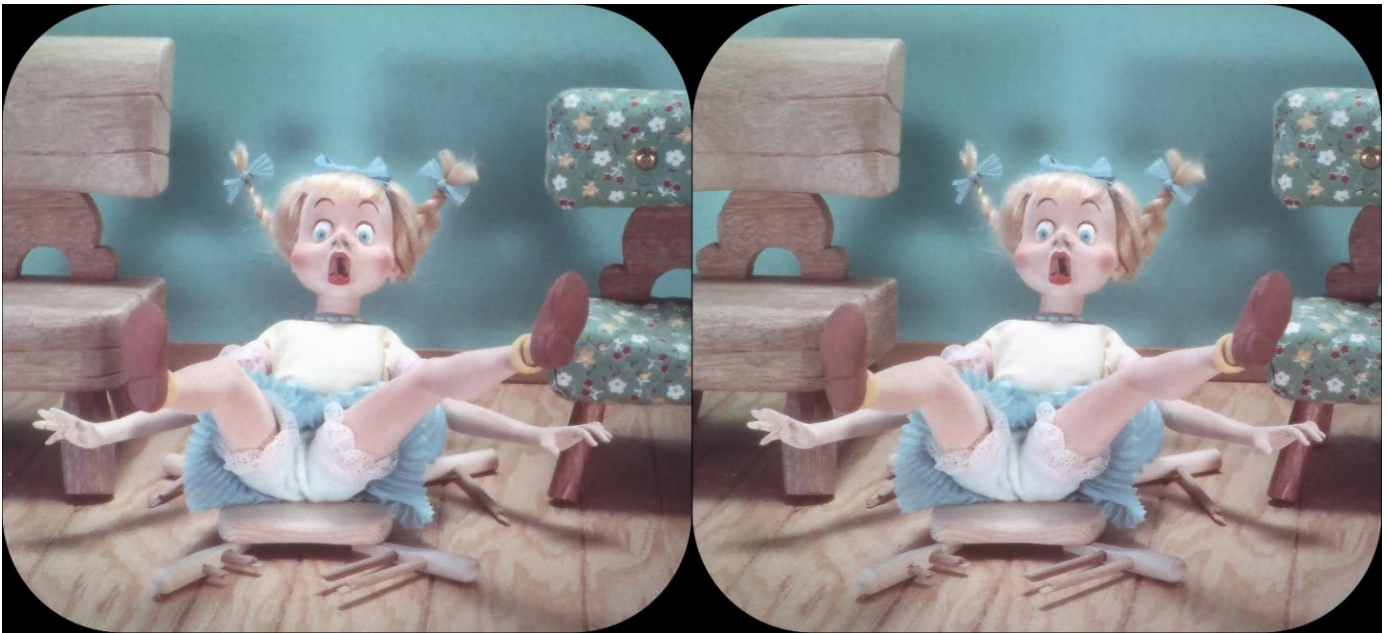
Frosty, the Snow Man knew the sun was hot that day,  
So he said, "Let's run and we'll have some fun  
now before I melt away."



Frosty, the Snow Man knew the sun was hot that day,  
So he said, "Let's run and we'll have some fun  
now before I melt away."

1950 Tru-View S-1 Frosty the Snow Man (4) – – Restored from faded card  
The date on the card is the copyright and the scenes were made later





1956 FT14 4 Goldilocks - She sat on Baby Bear's chair and broke it  
This was originally Tru-View F-5 but was later republished on View-Master reel FT-14



He gazed in wonder at her lovely face. Then,  
so gently, he kissed her as she lay asleep.

He gazed in wonder at her lovely face. Then,  
so gently, he kissed her as she lay asleep.

1956 Tru-View F-6 Sleeping Beauty (5) – – Restored from faded card  
Notice the different perspective looking through spider web



This scene has a completely different perspective to the previous ones created by unknown Hollywood artists, and later by Florence Thomas. There is a striking resemblance between Gretel and Goldilocks.



Gretel pretended she couldn't open the oven.  
When the witch opened it, Gretel pushed!



Gretel pretended she couldn't open the oven.  
When the witch opened it, Gretel pushed!

1957 Tru-Vue F-7 Hansel & Getel (6) – Restored from faded card

Little Black Sambo has a scene with great depth viewed from the top of the tree where Sambo is hiding. This ultimate scene has pancakes obviously made from “tiger butter”. This differs from Florence Thomas’s lush realism for the same story.



They melted to Tiger butter, so Black Mumbo  
made pancakes and Little Black Sambo ate 169!



They melted to Tiger butter, so Black Mumbo  
made pancakes and Little Black Sambo ate 169!

1957 Tru-Vue Little Black Sambo (7) – Restored from faded card



View-Master had 3 versions of The Night before Christmas. One was a single reel FT30 by Florence Thomas. Another was a 3 reel packet B382 by Martha Armstrong and Blanding Sloan with the father, son, and a dog viewing Santa. Joe's whimsical early one makes the mouse a major protagonist. It was released as Tru-Vue S-2 which has faded. Fortunately, it was also released on permanent film as a reel.



1955 FT29 1 The Night Before Christmas - Not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse



1955 FT29 3 The Night Before Christmas - When what to my wondering eye should appear



In 1961 Joe created a 3 reel packet of Gulliver's Travels treating just the Liliput chapters. They used an anonymous workman when the hired actor failed to show up.



B3742 Gulliver's Travels 09 Gulliver spied the enemy fleet in the harbor of Blefescu



B3742 Gulliver's Travels 08 'If you help us win the war you are free,' said the king

One of his notable non-Disney packets was The Little Drummer Boy in 1958.



1958 View-Master B8711 Little Drummer Boy 4 Hating all men, Aaron's troupe tramped the desert alone

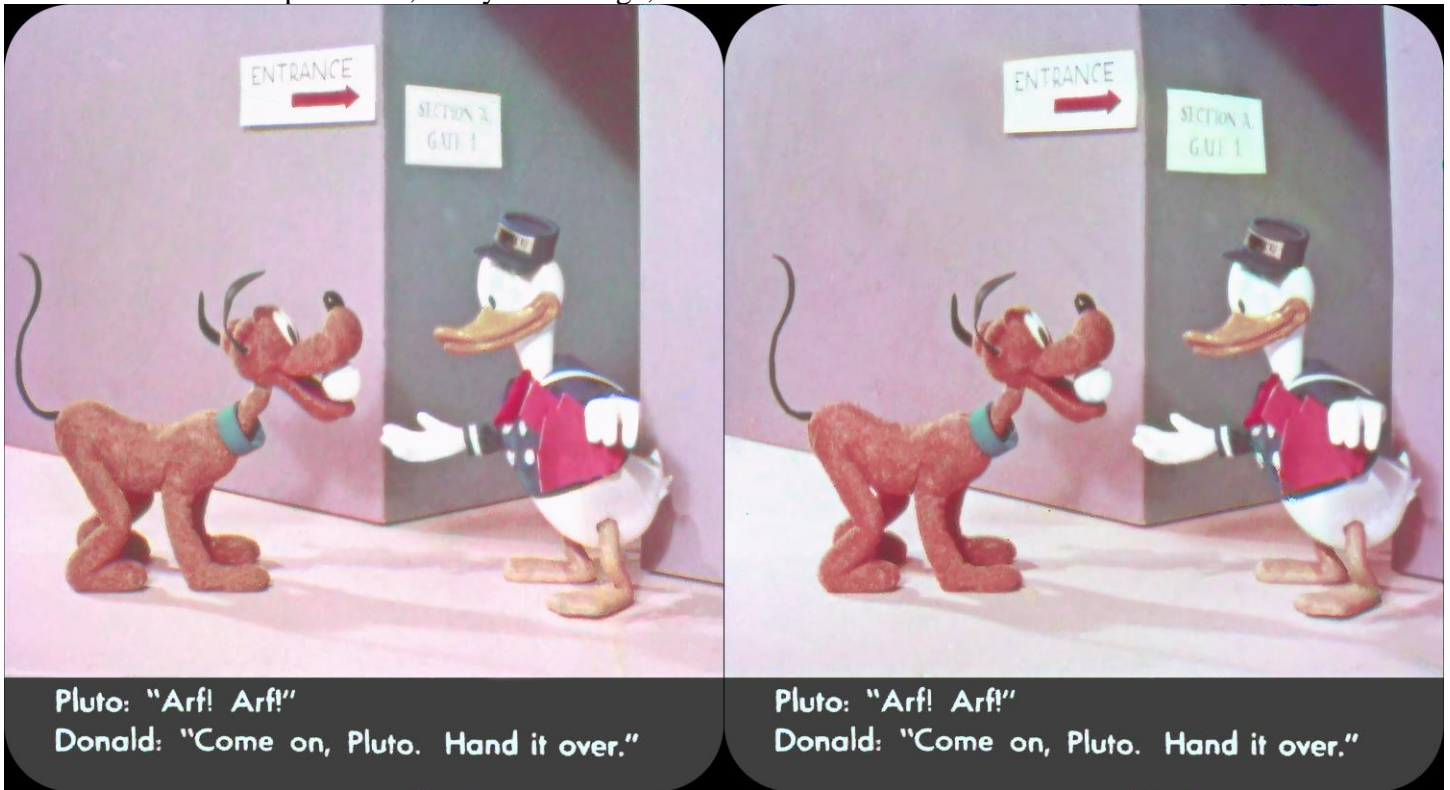
Quick Draw McGraw is another packet where he displays his ability to change styles.



1961 View-Master B5341 3 Quick Draw McGraw "Chatanooga Chief" –  
"Thees ees fun, Queekstraw, look, there's a sign!"



No history of Joe's work would be complete without showing some of his Disney reels. His first one on Tru-Vue was never republished, to my knowledge, on durable Kodachrome film.



1953 Tru-Vue D-3 Pluto in Baseball Catcher – Restored from faded card

His last Disney packet was, to my knowledge, "Mickey's Jubilee" packet on inferior GAF film. However it was republished by View-Master International on better film in a blister pack.



1978 View-Master J29 A4 Sorcerer's Apprentice "and commanded the waves"



In between he created many Disney reels. His Bambi card was, to my knowledge, never republished as a View-Master reel. Since Joe's Bambi reel and the subsequent 3 reel packet of Bambi are made to ape cells in the movie one could combine them to good effect.



1957 Tru-Vue D23 Bambi (4) – Restoration from faded original

These are three of his earliest ones originally Tru-Vue but available on durable Kodachrome film View-Master reels.



1953 View-Master B5232 Donald Duck als Tiefseetaucher 7 Nur blasenkaugumm war in der kiste!

Donald Duck as Deep Sea Diver – Exploding chewing gum (bubblegum) was in the mouth  
This was restored from a German packet made in the View-Master Belgium plant.





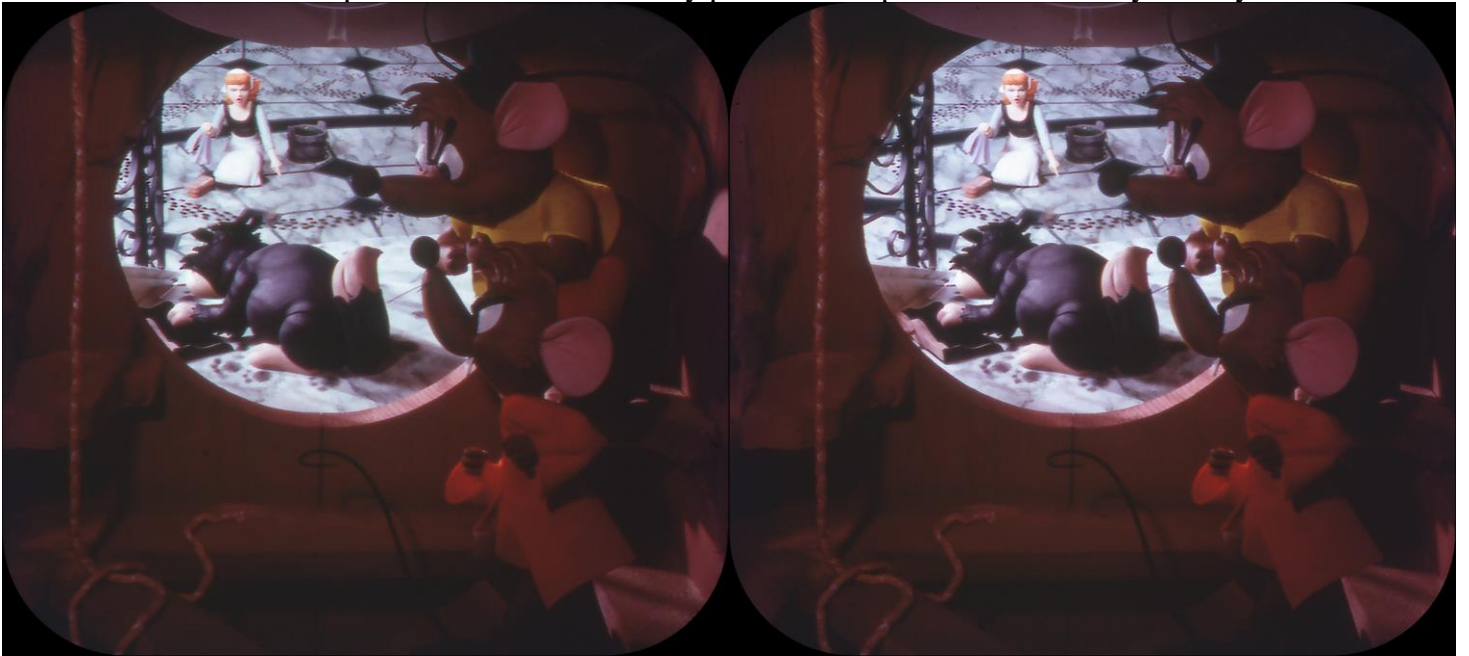
1954 View-Master B3151 Pinocchio "comes to Life" 5 "Awake," the fairy said, "I give you life"



1955 B3152 Lady and the Tramp 7 Lady, Tramp, and their pups were welcomed home



Cinderella is his most complicated work. He was very proud of this packet with its many overlays.



1965 View-Master B318 Cinderella 01 "That Lucifer is being mean to Cinderella!" said the mice



B318 Cinderella 10 ...and the girls rags into a gown complete with glass slippers



One of his most popular Disney projects was the Jungle Book. The original movie is a loose adaptation of the Kipling books.



1966 View Master B363 Jungle Book 01 The wolf pack decided Mowgli man cub must leave



1966 View-Master B363 Jungle Book 05 Next morning Colonel Hathi's Dawn Patrol marched by



His Winnie the Pooh series of packets have been popular and have been reprinted many times.



1964 View-Master B362 07 Pooh and the Honey Tree - With the balloon, Pooh "flew" up into the honey tree



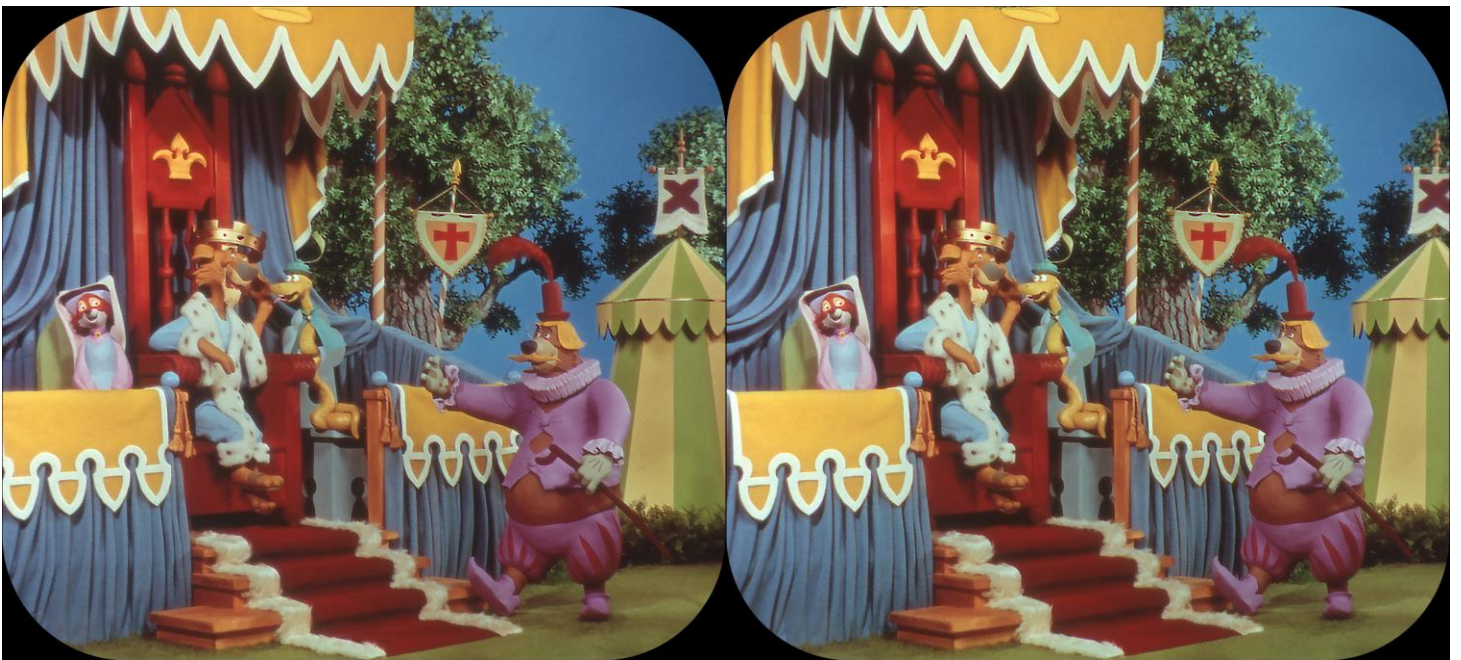
1976 B369 B6 Winnie the Pooh and Tigger Too – Tigger stuck up in a tree



This is another of his Disney packets that have been reprinted a number of times.



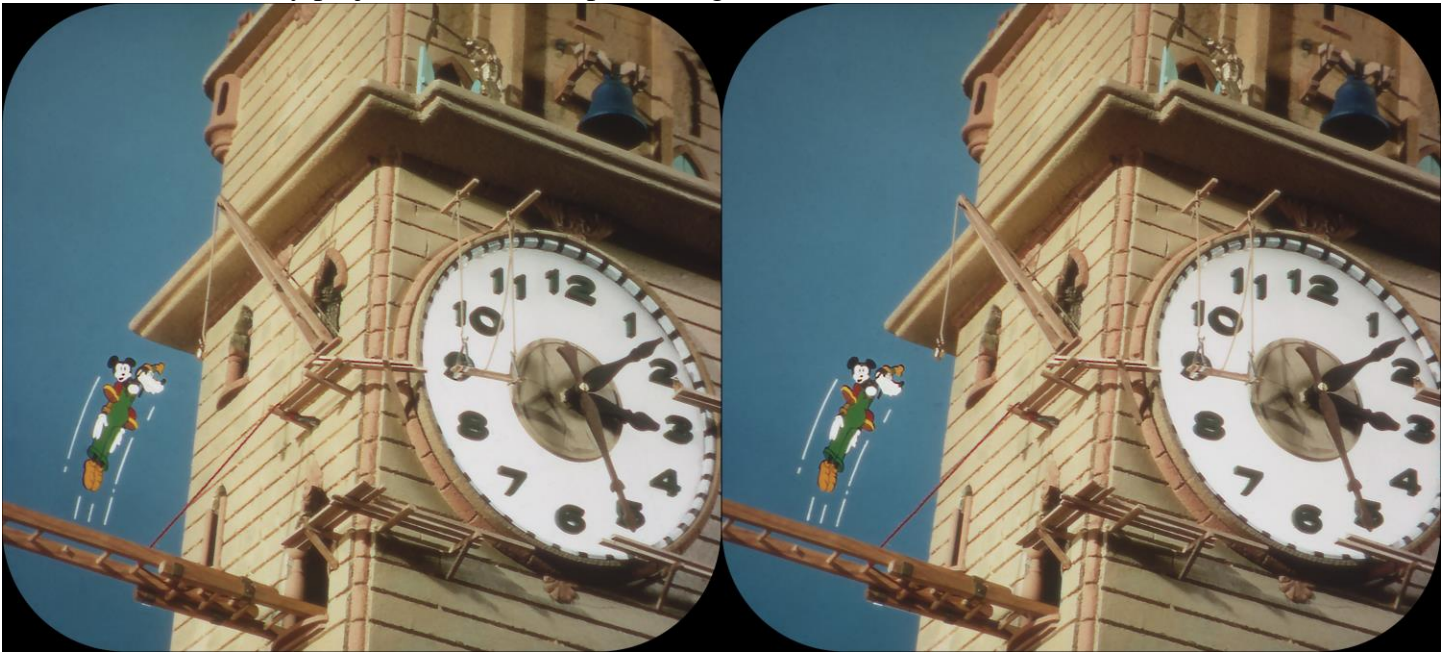
1973 B3421 1 Robin Hood - Robin Hood and Little John saw a royal coach coming



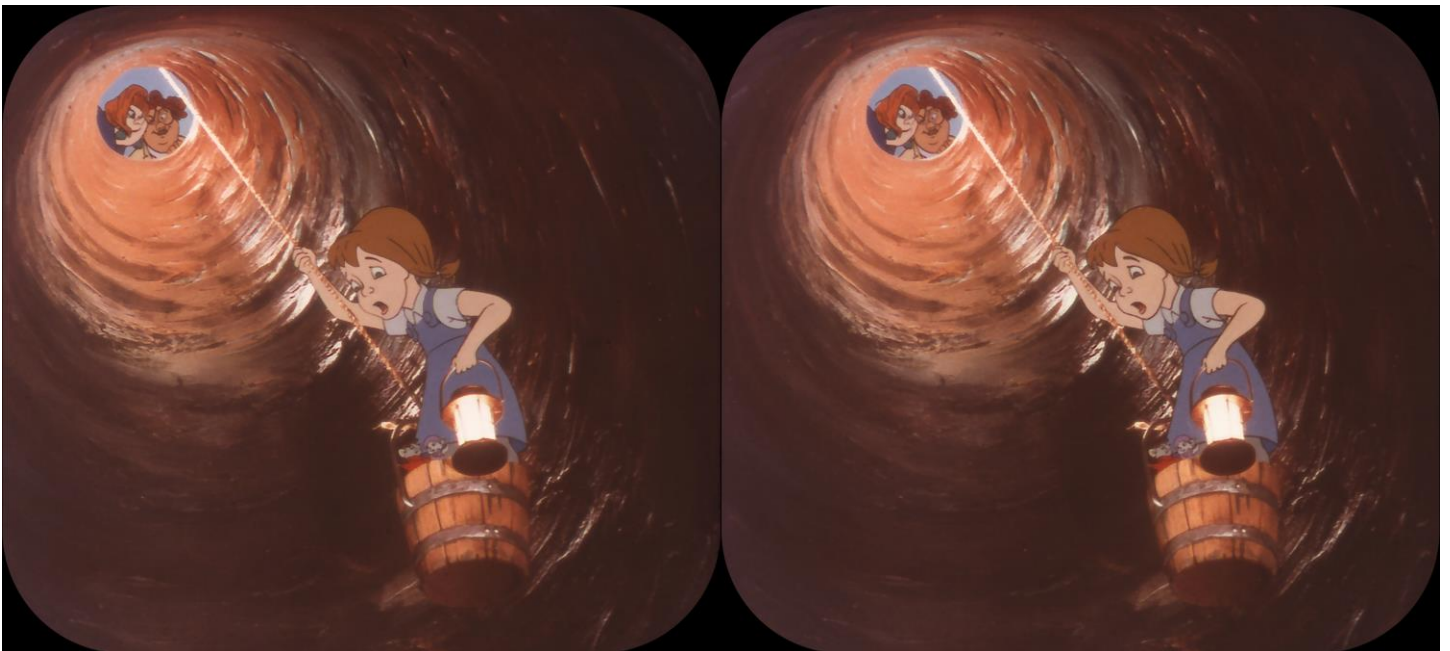
1973 B3421 7 Robin Hood - At the archery tourney, Little John pretended to be a Duke



Some of his last Disney projects used his sculpted background dioramas with cartooned characters.



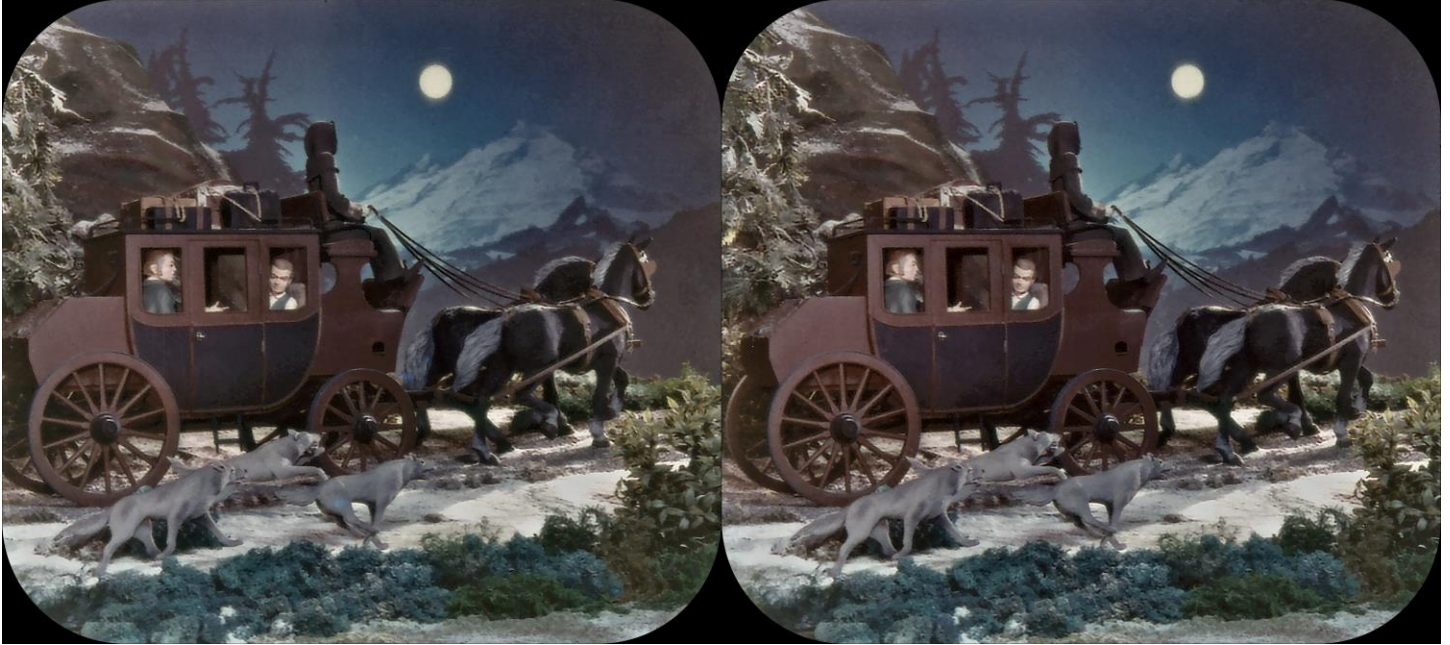
1971 View-Master B5513 Mickey Mouse in Clock Cleaners 3  
...then it snapped Goofy high into the air! He picked up Mickey



1977 View-Master H26 The Rescuers C1 Snoops lowers Penny and mice into a sea cave



Two of Joe's greatest creations, of which he was justly proud, were Dracula and Wolf-Man. They are very atmospheric creature features. Unfortunately most were published on inferior GAF film after 1977 that faded to magenta, but a few unfaded Kodachrome reels were made.. Dracula covers Johnathan Harker's atmospheric visit to castle Dracula and the final ending of the original story by Bram Stoker. The reels added Johnathan's son and changed Dr. Van Helsing to the local school master. The character of Anna was added inspired by the baby in the original. Only Dracula perishes in the reels unlike the original story. These reels used photographs of real scenery in some back grounds unlike previous work by Joe.



1976 View-Master B324 Dracula A4— Restored from faded reel



1976 View-Master B324 Dracula C6— Restored from faded reel





1977 H14 B3 Golden Book Favorites, Poky Little Puppy - He was sniffing "I smell rice pudding"

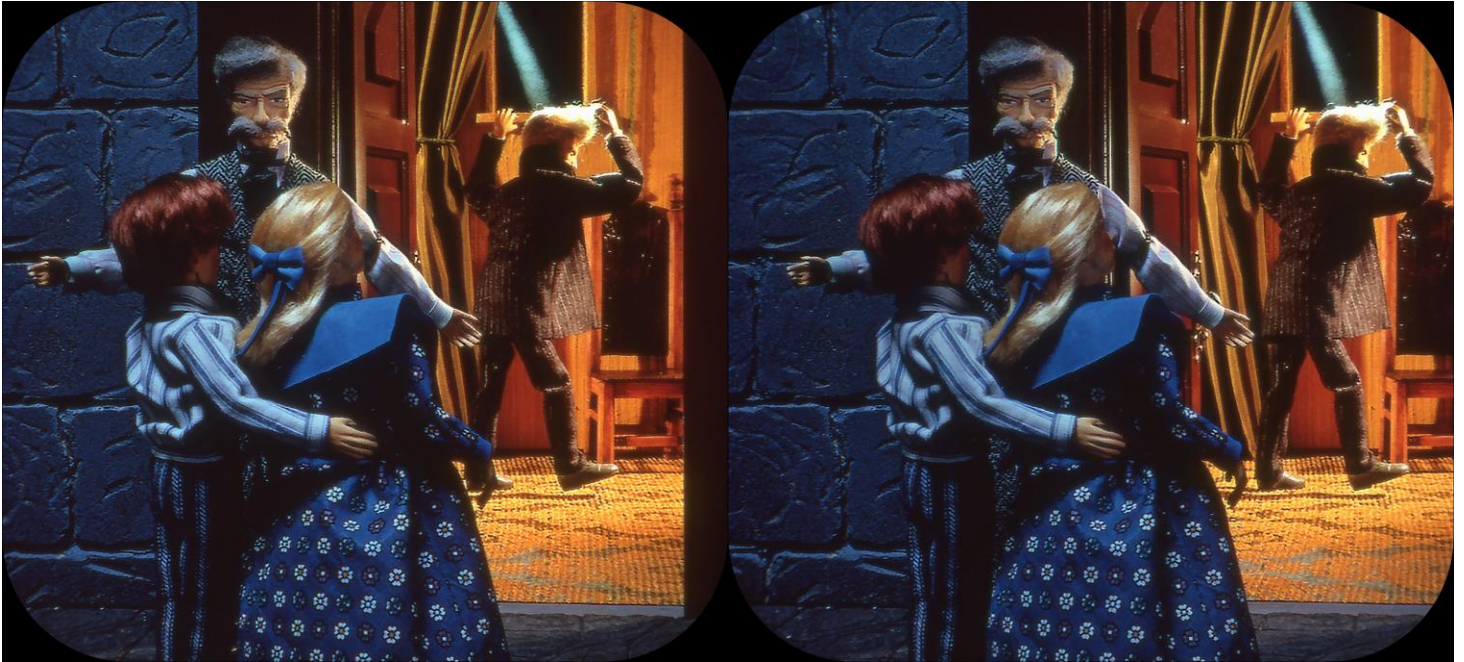


1977 H14 C4 Golden Book Favorites, Saggy Baggy Elephant - A crocodile frightened him away

This packet contains 3 Golden Book Stories: Tawny Scrawny Lion, The Poky Little Puppy, and The Saggy Baggy Elephant. The cute scenes are very nice, but most of the reels were manufactured between 1978 through 1981 so they have faded to magenta. There are a few reels probably manufactured by VMI using which are not faded. These two scenes were restored from unfaded reels.



Wolfman was a creation of the original Hollywood movie with completely made up “legends”, unlike Dracula which was a novel based on researched legends. Unlike the movie Wolfman survives and is cured by a silver bullet through the heart. The View-Master story is a new made-up confection involving a botanist visiting the area with his children. Wolfman is the embarrassing son of a nobleman who melts his silver cane head to make the bullets. They used articulated dolls to make the packet more quickly at less expense. The children were apparently added to the creature features to appeal to the young audience. Most of the reels were manufactured with inferior GAF stock that faded to magenta, but a few rare early copies are on unfaded Kodachrome.



1978 J30 Wolf Man B1 Baron Anton welcomes Tom and Sarah– Restored from Kodachrome reel



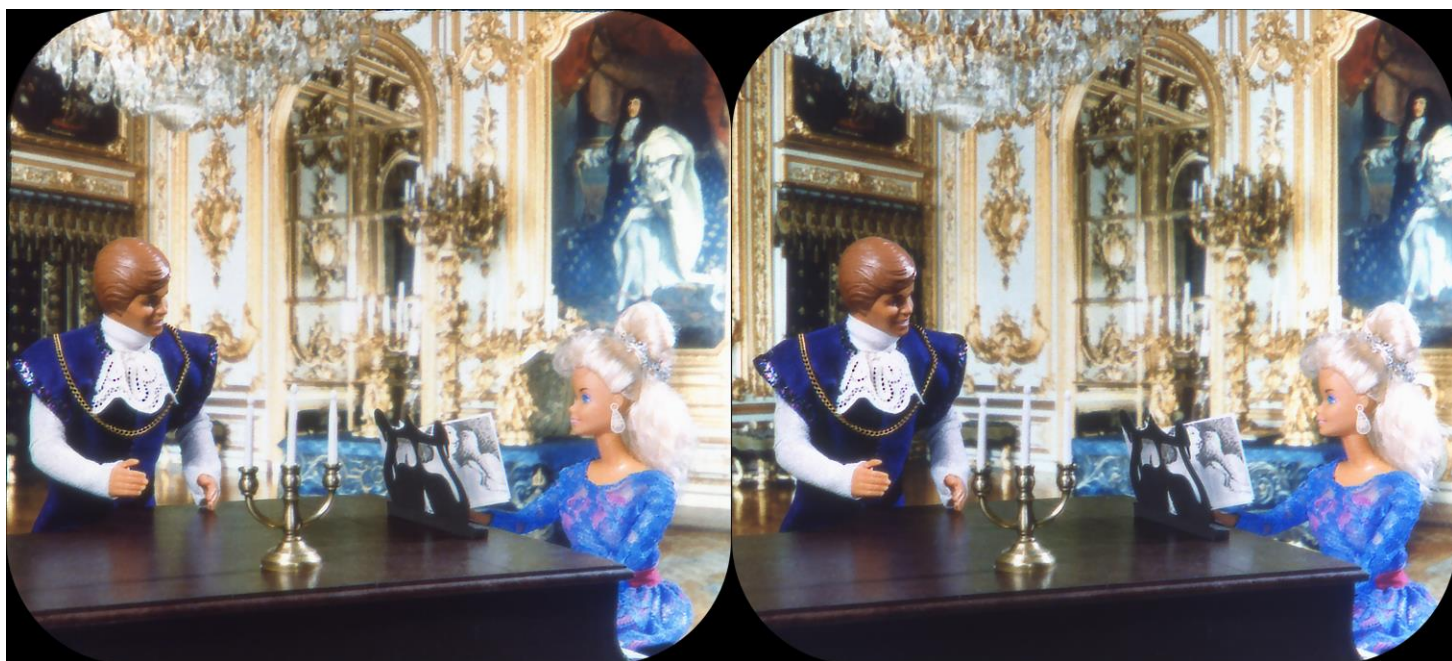
1978 J30 Wolf Man C3 Wolf Man howls at the Moon– Restored from Kodachrome reel



While Lelia Heath is known for her Barbie reels, Joe also produced two.



1986 4071-C 21 Barbie and the Rockers - Barbie wins Singer of the Year award



1989 4093 A4 Barbie - Barbie adored filming in European castles...





1989 4093 B3 Barbie - And a warm campfire with the movie crew

These later reels used 3D photos of actual scenes in the background. Unfortunately, the moon was added with poor vertical alignment. This image has the poor alignment fixed.



1992 4139 A3 Crash Dummies - "Let's split, Daryl!"

This is probably his last diorama pack





Monkey Business pilot scene for unfinished story by Joe Liptak, courtesy of Wolfgang Sell



Joe himself working on Cinderella mouse circa 1970s  
 3D photo by Cliff Bond, Hank Gaylord, Digitization-Wolfgang Sell, Restoration-J. Clement



Bibliography: *View-Master Memories* by Mary Ann & Wolfgang Sell

Uncredited attributions came from this reference and private communication with Wolfgang Sell. The list of Joe's work may be incomplete because sometimes View-Master did not credit the primary artists, and usually did not credit contributing artists or photographers. Indeed, View-Master failed to properly credit any of the other important individuals such as the writers, and book/packet cover illustration artists.

Tru-View cards created by Joe Liptak:

1. 1950 S-1 Frosty the Snowman (copyright date, not actual production date)
2. 1953 F-1 Cinderella
3. 1953 F-2 Little Red Riding Hood
4. 1953 F-3 Jack and the Beanstalk
5. 1953 D-3 Pluto Baseball Catcher
6. 1956 F-6 Sleeping Beauty
7. 1956 E-1 The Easter Bunny's Surprise
8. 1957 F-7 Hansel and Gretel
9. 1957 F-8 Little Black Sambo
10. 1957 D-23 Bambi

Early Tru-View cards later crossed over to View-Master created by Joe Liptak:

1. 1953 TV D-1 VM B5231 Mickey Mouse in Mickey's Birthday Party
2. 1953 TV D-2 VM B5232 Donald Duck in Deep Sea Diver
3. 1954 TV D-4 VM B3151 Pinocchio comes to life
4. 1954 TV D-5 VM B3153 Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs
5. 1954 TV D-6 VM B5233 Peter Pan
6. 1955 TV D-7 VM B3152 Lady and the Tramp
7. 1955 TV S-2 VM FT-29 The Night Before Christmas
8. 1955 TV F-4 VM B3071 The Three Little Pigs
9. 1956 TV F-5 VM FT-14 Goldilocks
10. 1957 TV F-9 VM B3142 The Ugly Duckling

View-Master single reels by Joe Liptak:

1960 B3103 The Billy Goats Gruff (published later in a packet)

View-Master packets by Joe Liptak:

1. 1958 B851 Little Drummer Boy
2. 1961 B375 Gulliver's Travels
3. 1961 B534 Quick Draw McGraw
4. 1962 B514 The Flintstones
5. 1962 B531 Bugs Bunny (with Martha Armstrong, uncredited)
6. 1962 B901 Seven Wonders of the World (with Lelia Heath, Florence Thomas, Frank Visage, Joe is uncredited)
7. 1964 B362 Winnie the Pooh and the Honey Tree
8. 1964 B520 Pebbles & Bamm-Bamm
9. 1965 B318 Cinderella
10. 1969 B545 Casper's Ghostland (with Lew Turner, Photography:Hank Gaylord)
11. 1970 B584 Superman meets Computer Crook (with Lew Turner, Photography:Hank Gaylord)
12. 1972 B549 Bugs Bunny in Big Top Bunny (with Lew Turner, Photography:Hank Gaylord)
13. 1973 B342 Disney's Robin Hood
14. 1973 B551 Micky Mouse Clock Cleaners (with Lew Turner, Photography:Hank Gaylord)



15. 1975 B810 The Revolutionary War (with Lelia Heath Pearson, Mary Lewis, Frank Visage, Photography:Hank Gaylord)
16. 1976 B342 Dracula (uncredited)
17. 1976 B369 Winnie the Pooh & Tigger Too
18. 1977 B363 Jungle Book
19. 1977 H14 Golden Book Favorites
20. 1978 J30 Wolf-Man (Uncredited)
21. 1979 J29 Mickey Mouse Jubilee (with Pete Dorsett, uncredited)
22. 1979 K37 Winnie the Pooh & The Blustery Day (with Pete Dorsett, uncredited)
23. 1980 L29 The Fox and the Hound (with Pete Dorsett, uncredited)
24. 1986 7152 Barbie and the Rockers (uncredited)
25. 1989 4093 Barbie featuring Barbie Superstar (uncredited)
26. 1992 4139 Crash Dummies (uncredited)

Dracula, Wolfman, and all of the 1978 to 1980 copyright packets were mainly published on unstable GAF film that faded to magenta. The later blister packs were published by VMI/Tycho on better film so it is possible to find unfaded republished reels. Some Dracula and Wolfman reels exist on very rare unfaded Kodachrome manufactured before 1978. Sadly, much of the very early work on Tru-Vue was not republished on archival film. Some Most can be restored with good color.

Restoring the old Tru-Vue cards is difficult. The blue dye has faded most, and the others have undergone some fading. The color restoration must be done with 16bits/color scanning, which allows for large color adjustments without artifacts. Kodak digital ROC does a fairly good job of bringing out the colors in pastel. The pro version must be set for zero at the endpoints. Then the hue has to be shifted slightly while the saturation raised a lot. Using a histogram adjustment, the dark levels are compressed while the bright ones are spread. Then the red has to be reduced a lot at the bottom endpoint and somewhat at the top. Some adjustment of the green ends may be needed. The original Focus Magic is used 4 times to refocus the result: 12, 7, 5 (film), and 14 at 25% with sometimes no spot removal. Colormancer Boundary Noise Reducer reduced some noise at level 50-60, and then a median filter at 7 softened remaining noise. Focus Magic can be used again for more final sharpening. Extensive spot removal by hand finishes the project. Sometimes obvious color problems were hand corrected such as gilding the golden egg or turning wine from blue to red. In between colors like yellow are often not quite right, but sometimes it is possible to have them closely match Kodachrome copies. The fading is uneven and smears details. Some can be corrected during the hand editing. All editing is done at 4k+ resolution. Stereo Photo Maker is used to perfectly align the right and left images. The subtitles and the pictures are edited separately because they are differently misaligned.